

#Angel





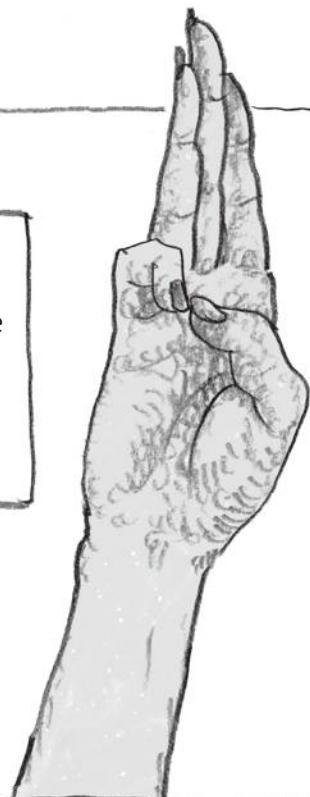
By the end of February, the much feared crackdown had already begun. Now, the daily death toll was sometimes in the dozens.



Kyal Sin, nicknamed “Angel”, became a symbol of the resistance.

A few days before her death, she posted her blood-type on Facebook and asked for her organs to be donated if something happened to her during the protests.

Kyal Sin was a dancer and taekwondo champion. She was nineteen years old when she was shot dead by the army. Like others, she protested the military coup with the three-finger salute from the Hunger Games films, used by pro-democracy protesters in Thailand.



On March 3, she was wearing a t-shirt that said: “Everything will be OK”.



It could have been anyone,  
it could have been me, it  
could have been my friend.

They can arrest us in our  
homes at night and we're  
terrified.



We just want our freedom back. If we lose, we'll have to live under a new military government, we'll have to live in fear with no future.

A black and white illustration showing two soldiers in a trench. One soldier is in the foreground, holding a rifle, while the other is further back. In the background, there is a large explosion or fire. The scene is depicted with heavy shading and texture.





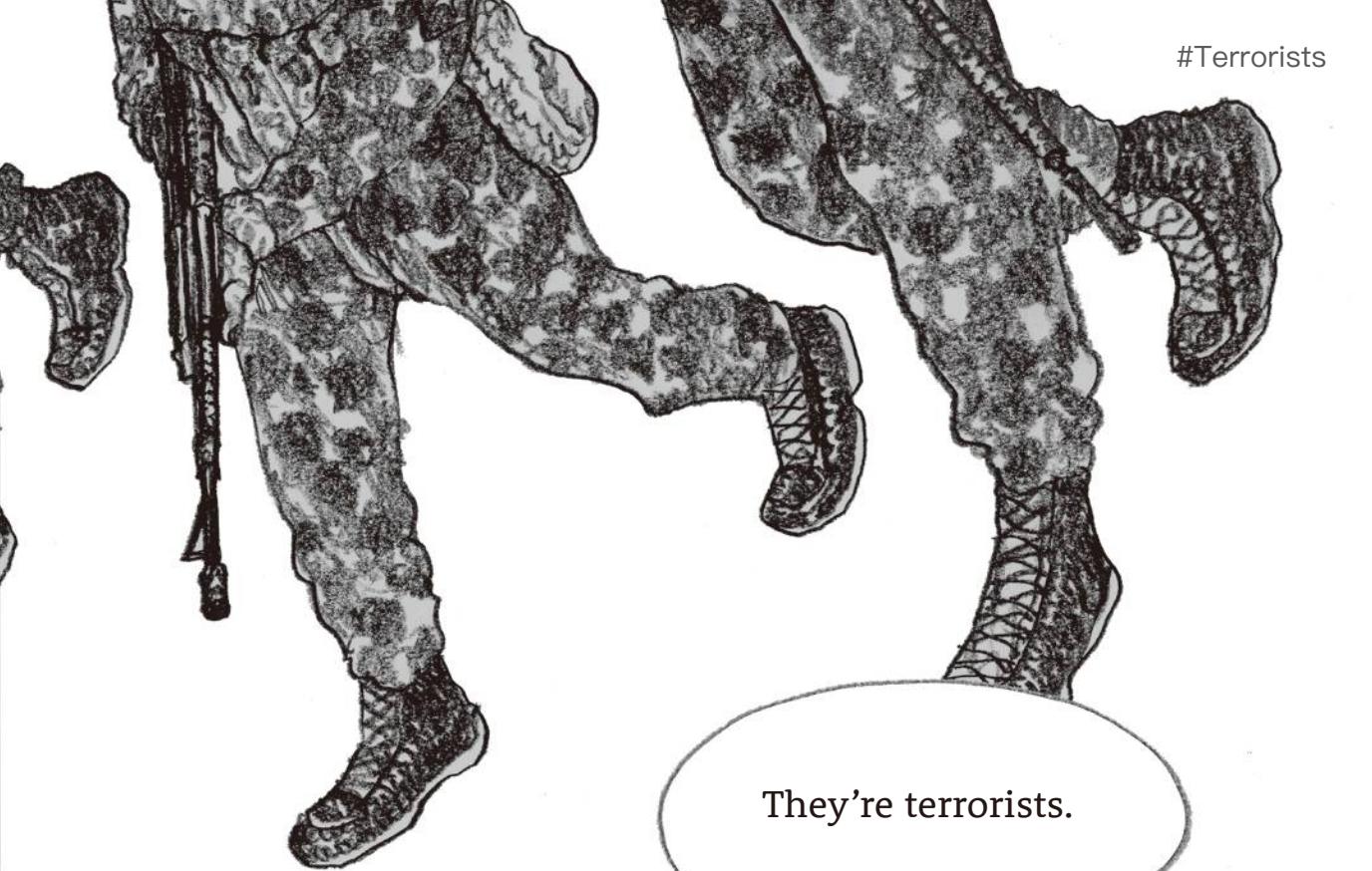
A 23-year-old student protester.

Sure I'm scared,

but I think it's  
our duty.

It's time to give our all.





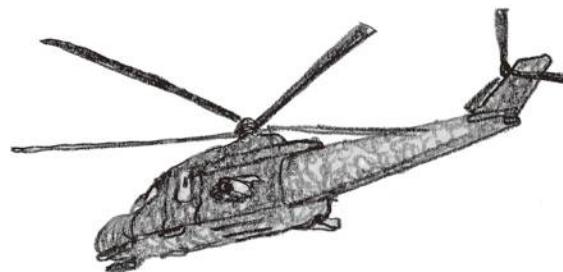
They're terrorists.



They're  
terrorising the  
population.

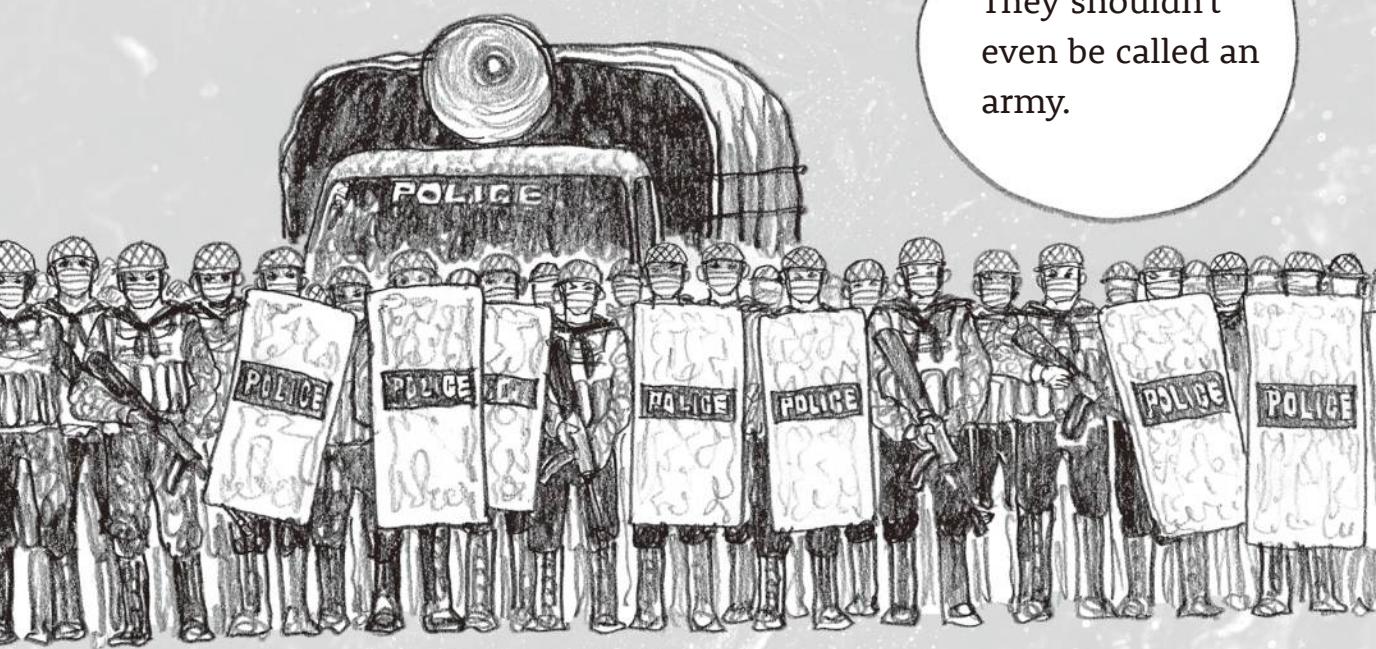
Well-known activist Thet Swe Win, believes the UN should send in peacekeepers.

Nothing good will come from the army.



They are murderers.

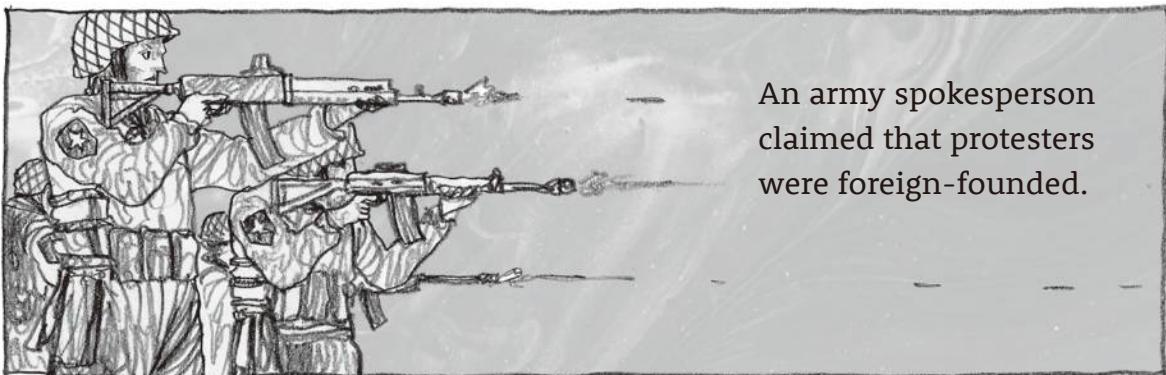
They shouldn't even be called an army.



His concerns are echoed by a Burmese army captain, speaking anonymously about the ideological brainwashing of soldiers:

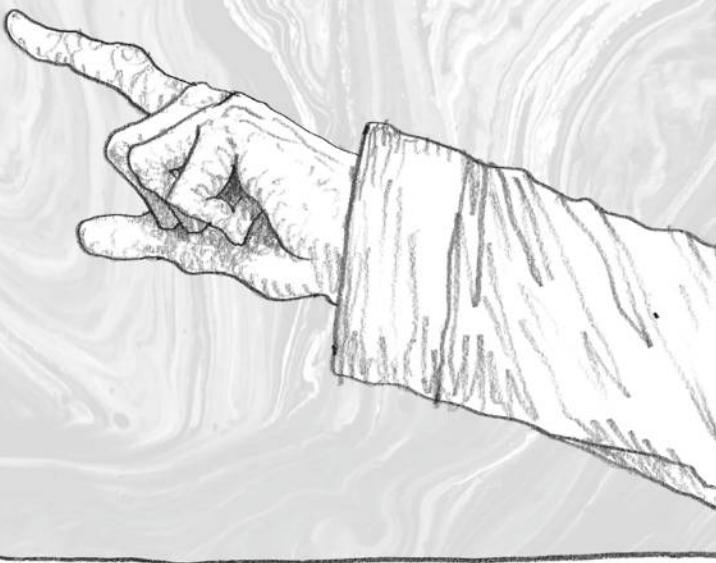


they are killing people with the mindset that they are protecting their nation from foreign intervention.

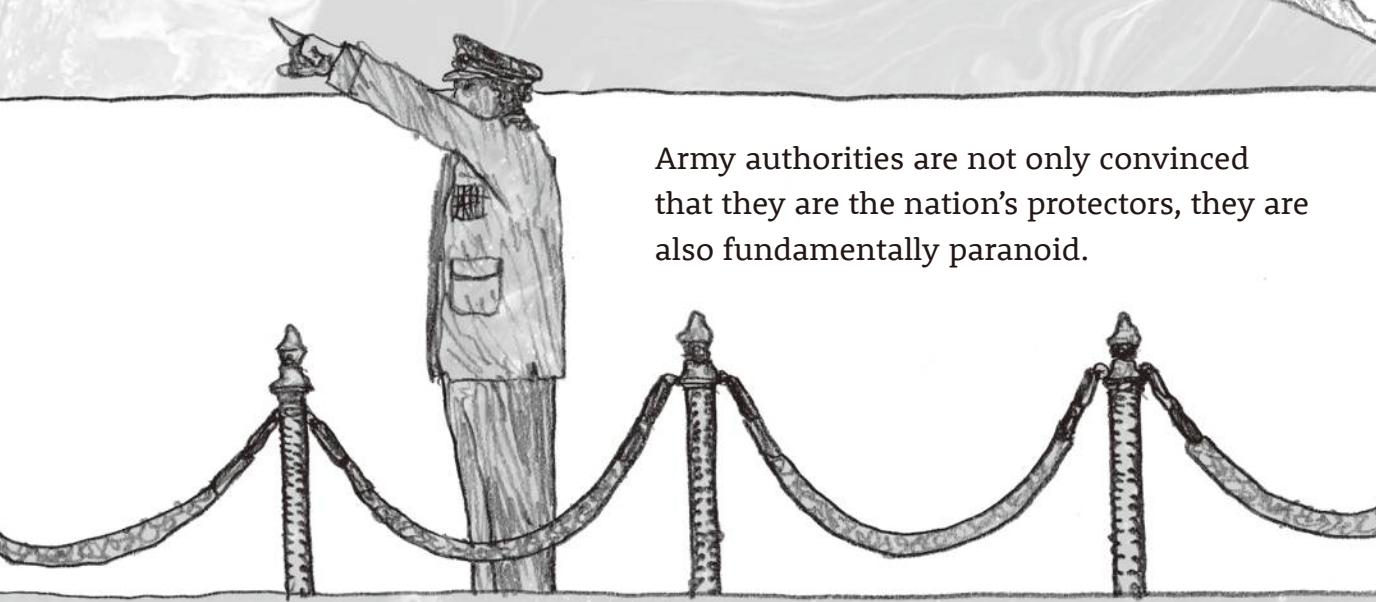


To retain their hold on the country's wealth, military command must stop soldiers from realising what is really going on.

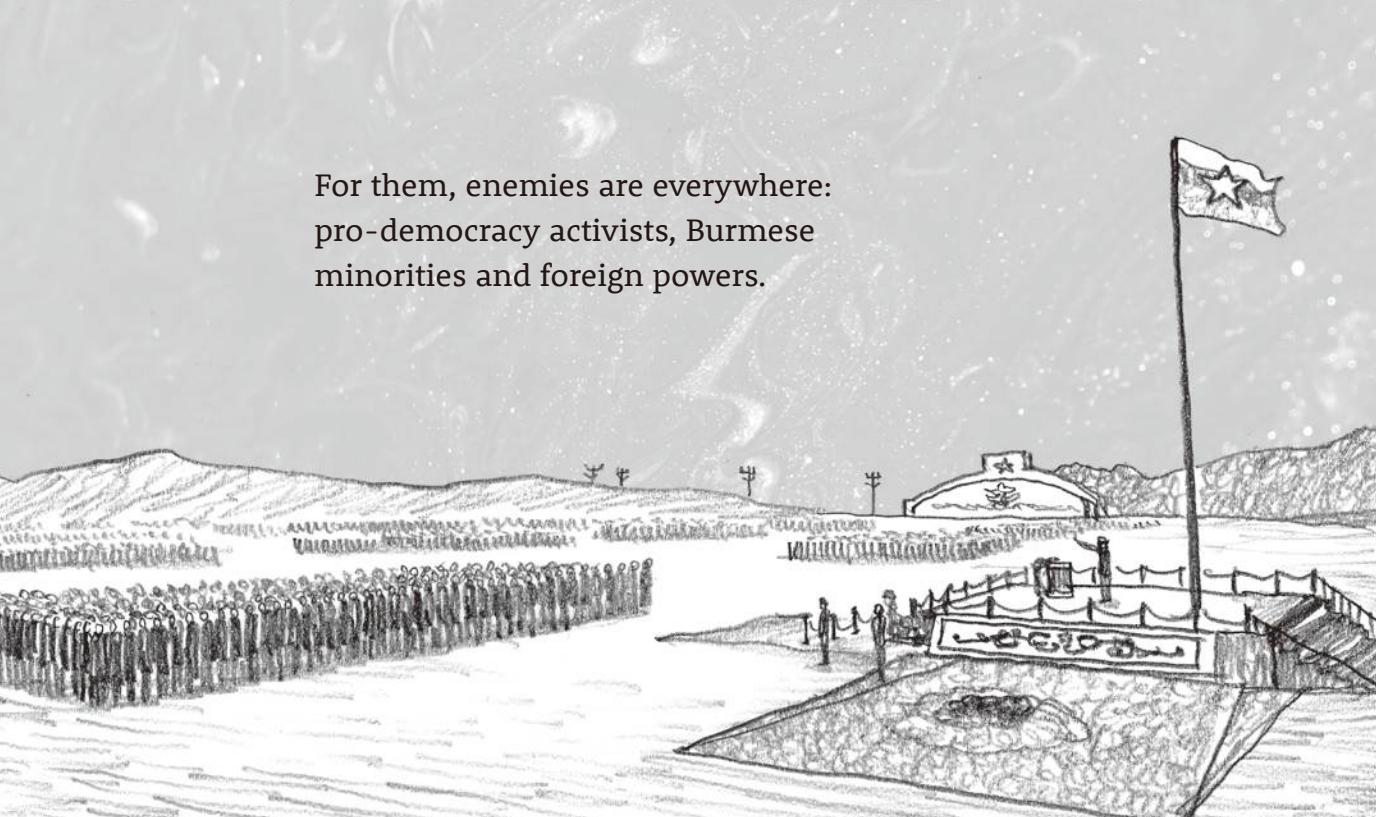




But this idea of a foreign plot may not simply be propaganda aimed at ensuring the loyalty of their troops.



Army authorities are not only convinced that they are the nation's protectors, they are also fundamentally paranoid.



For them, enemies are everywhere: pro-democracy activists, Burmese minorities and foreign powers.



We need action.

Thet Swe Win insists.

Words are no longer enough.

We keep being told that people are concerned about us, and that they condemn the army for this or that.

But these terrorists, these murderers – they don't care. They will keep killing people.



The problem is  
always the same:  
China and Russia.

They hold the power of  
veto at the United Nations  
Security Council and can  
block any effective action  
against the Burmese army.

But it's clear Beijing  
is not happy:

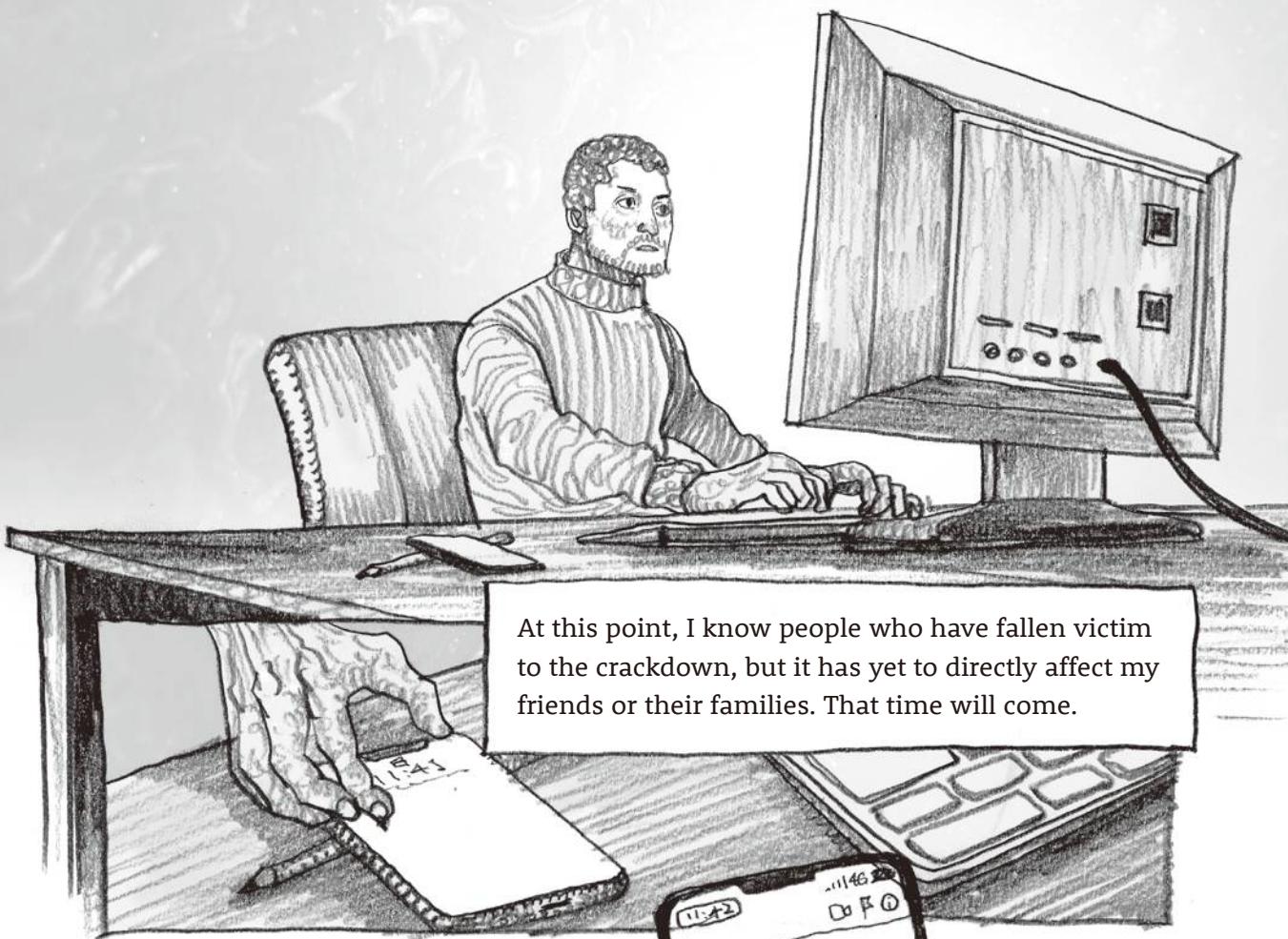
the military coup has  
created instability,  
and that's not good for  
business, especially for  
its new Belt and Road  
project,



for which Myanmar provides access to the Indian Ocean.

So China's support for the Burmese generals has flagged somewhat, but it is not yet ready to abandon them.





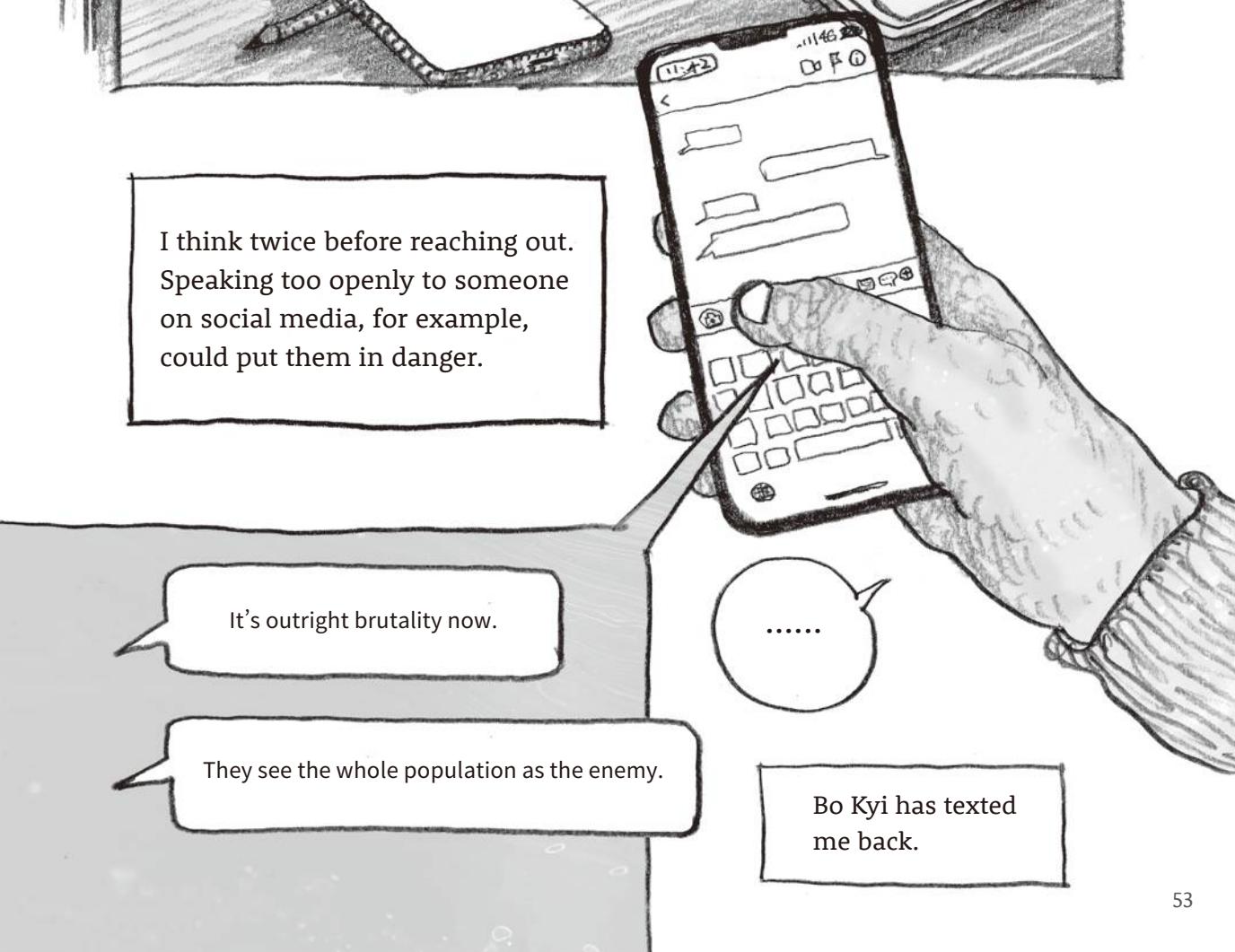
At this point, I know people who have fallen victim to the crackdown, but it has yet to directly affect my friends or their families. That time will come.

I think twice before reaching out. Speaking too openly to someone on social media, for example, could put them in danger.

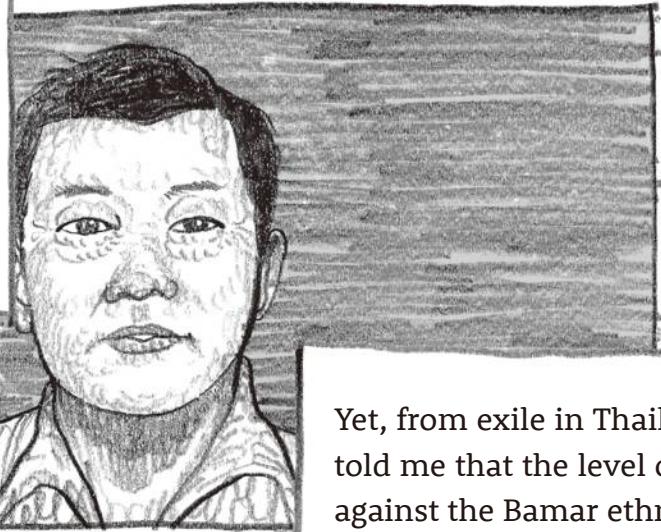
It's outright brutality now.

They see the whole population as the enemy.

Bo Kyi has texted me back.



He runs the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Myanmar\*. He lived through the repression of the 1988 pro-democracy movement, and paid for his convictions with years of imprisonment and torture.



Yet, from exile in Thailand, he told me that the level of violence against the Bamar ethnic majority is unprecedented.

\* 政治犯援助協會 (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners / AAPP) , 2000 年由緬甸流亡政治犯在泰國成立。

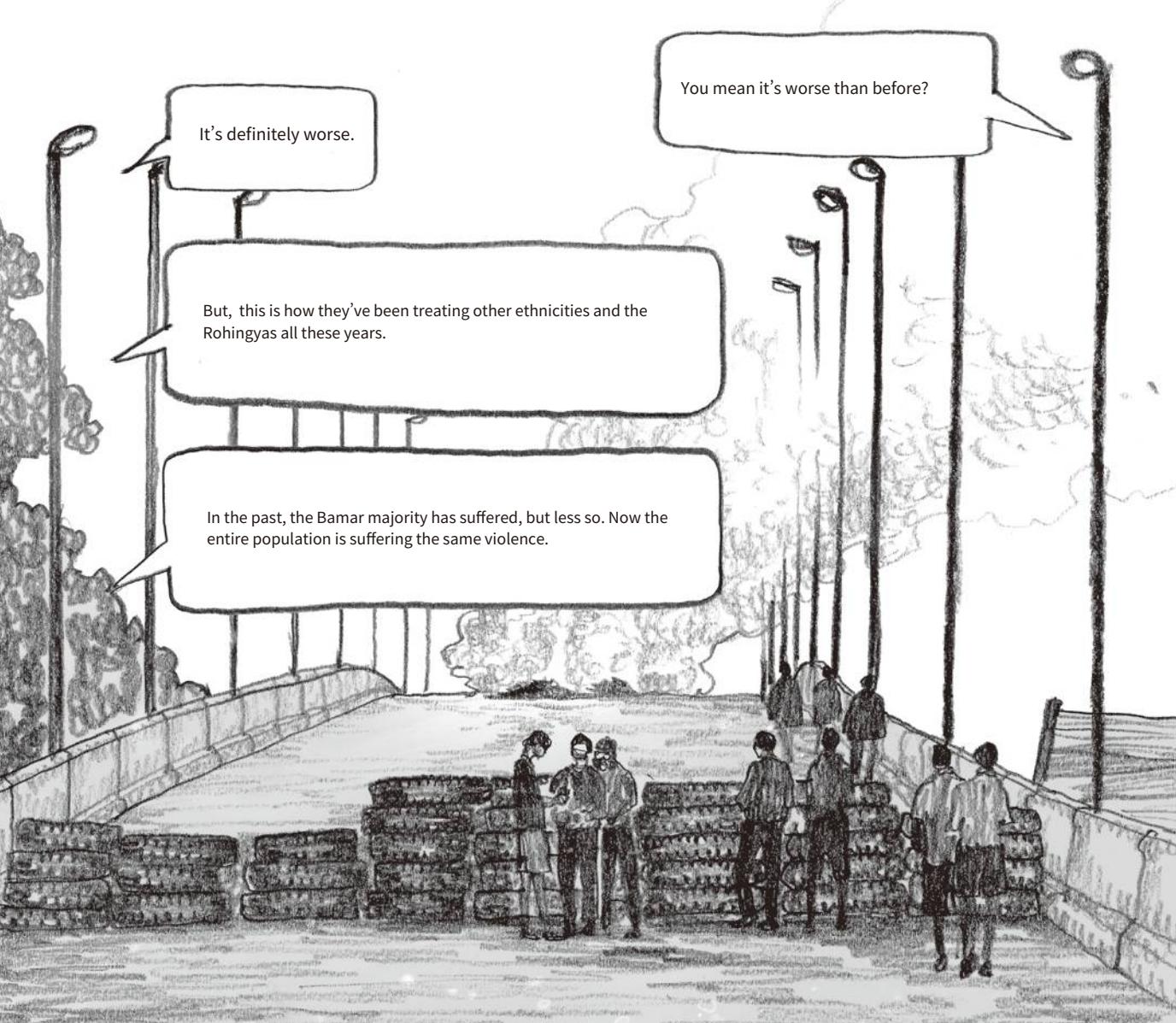
\* The AAPP was founded in Thailand in 2000 by former Burmese political prisoners.

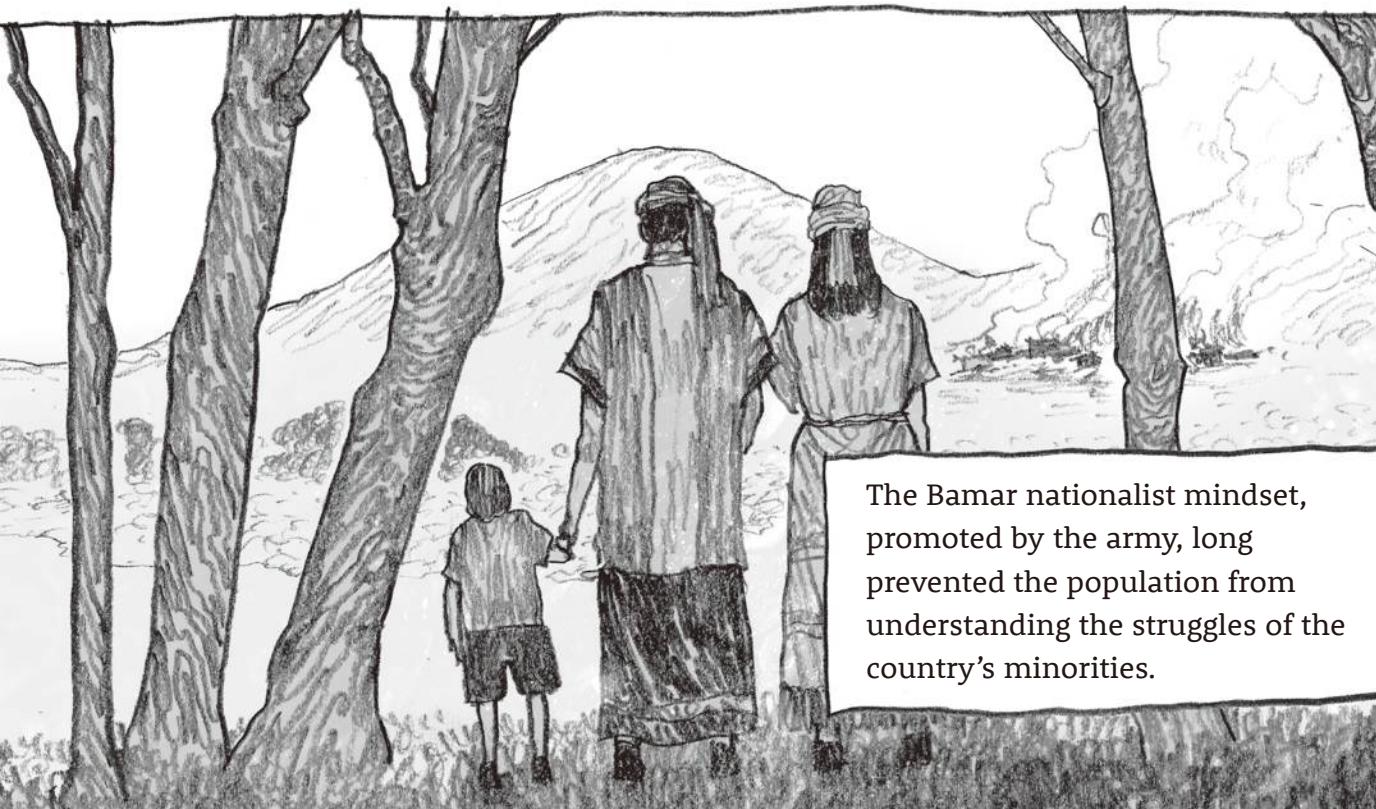
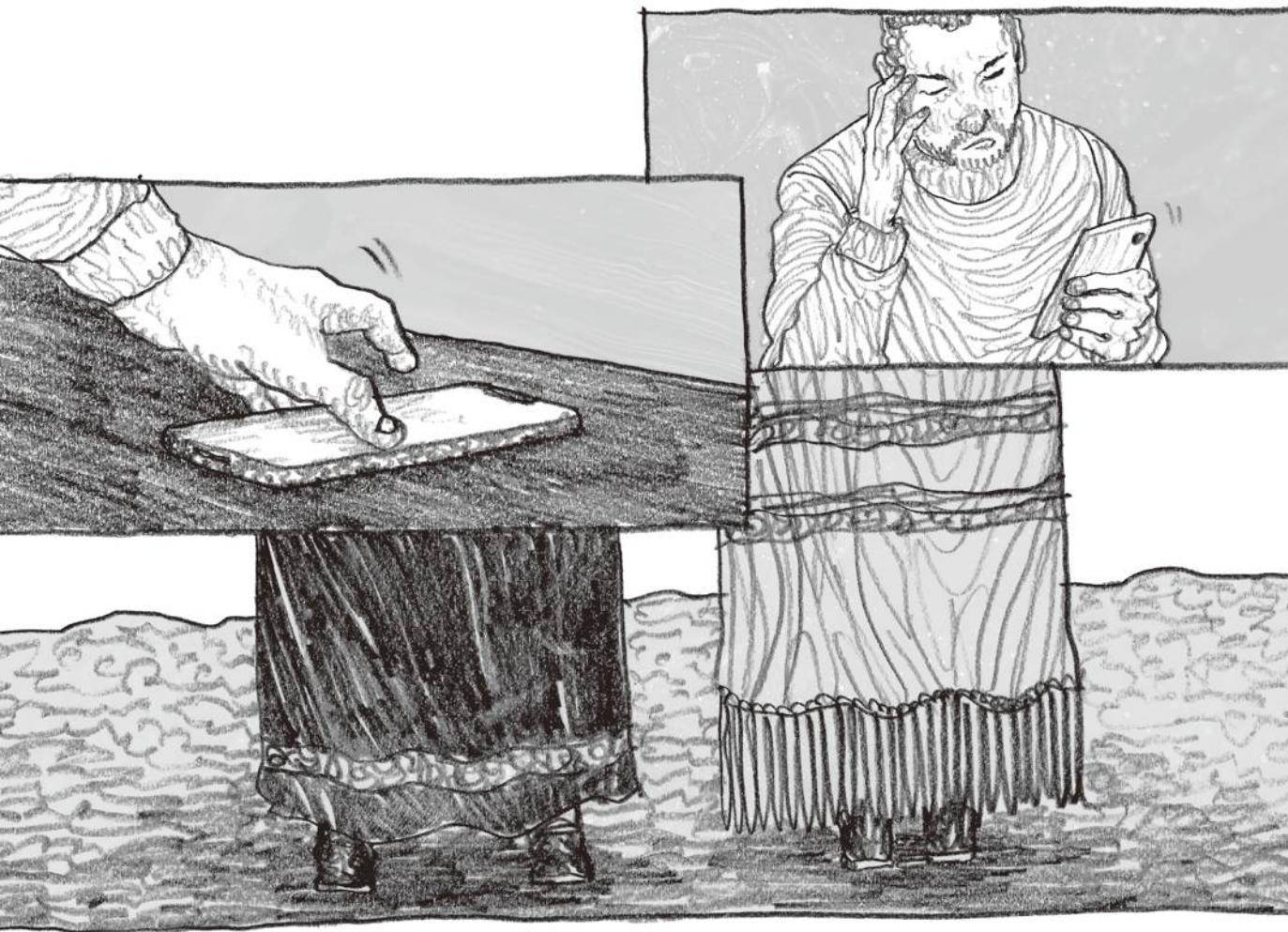
It's definitely worse.

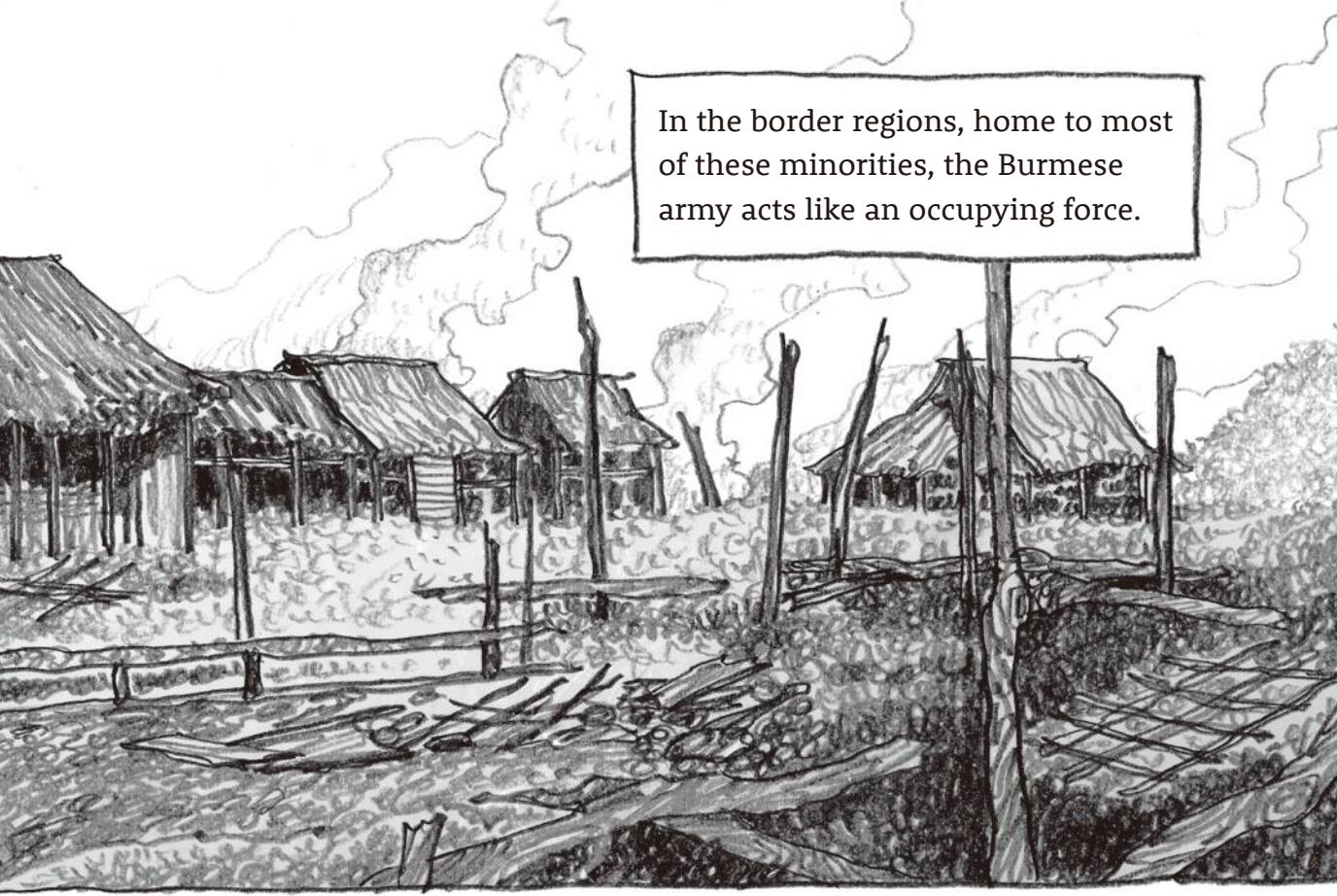
You mean it's worse than before?

But, this is how they've been treating other ethnicities and the Rohingyas all these years.

In the past, the Bamar majority has suffered, but less so. Now the entire population is suffering the same violence.

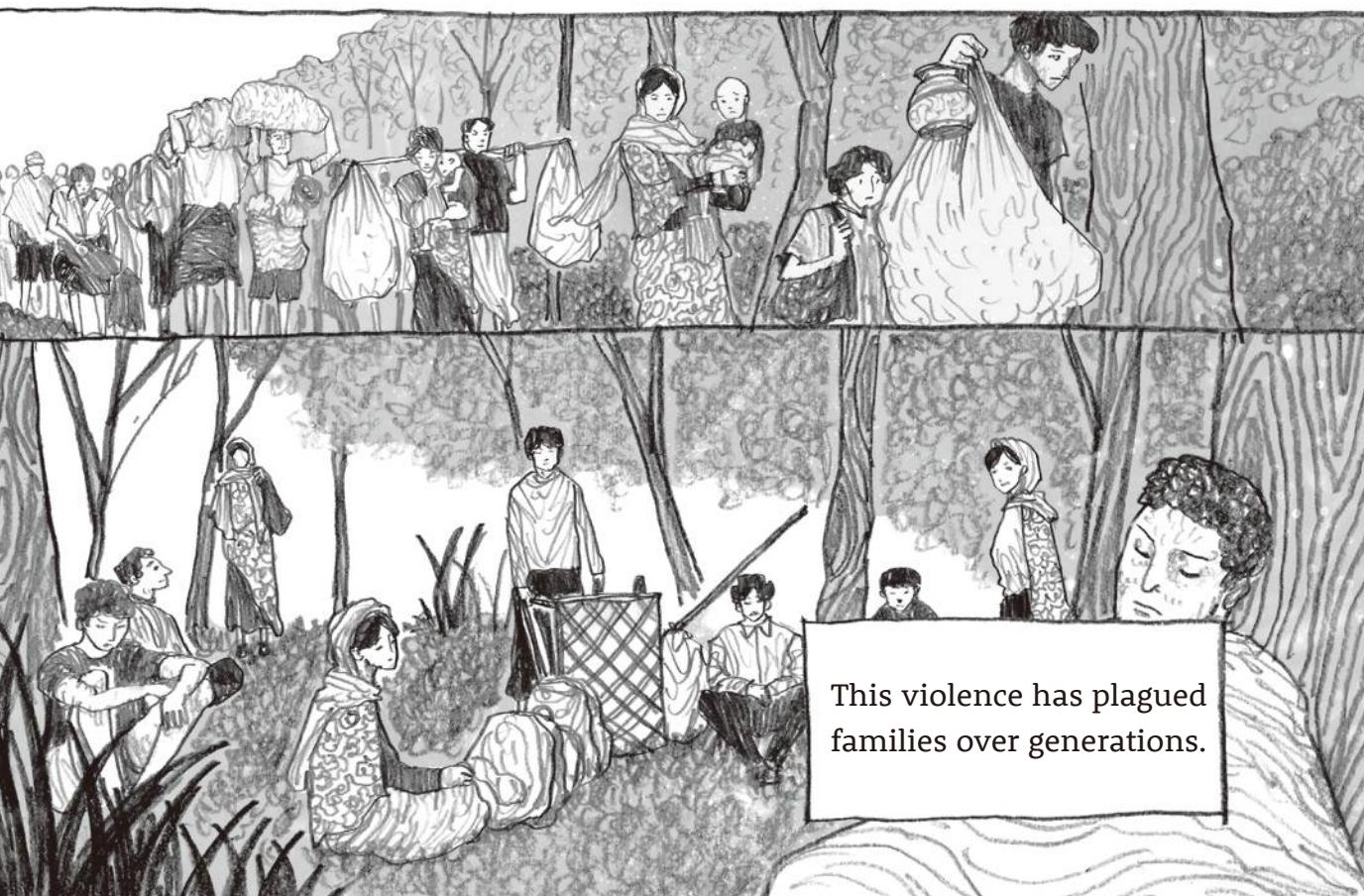






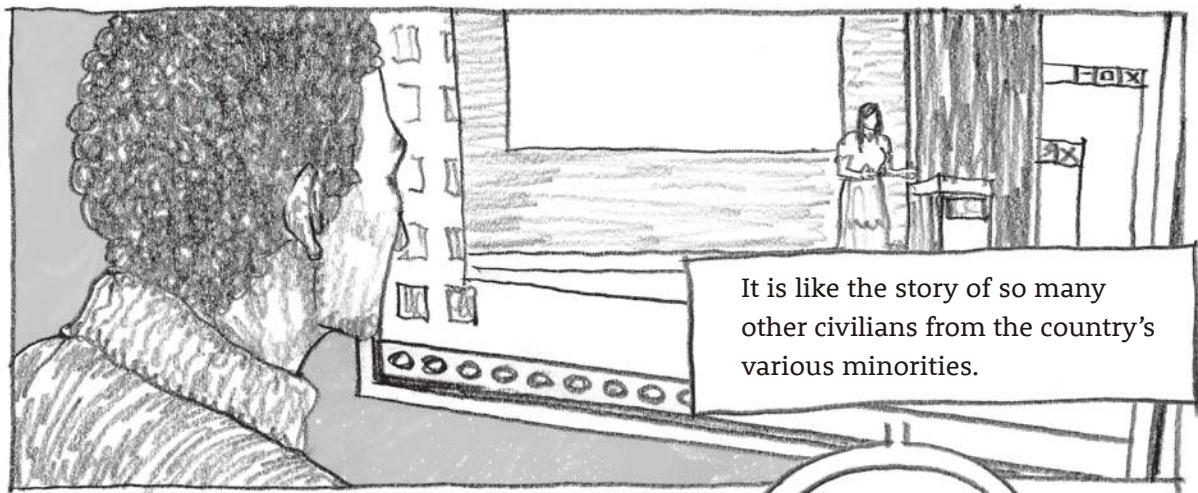
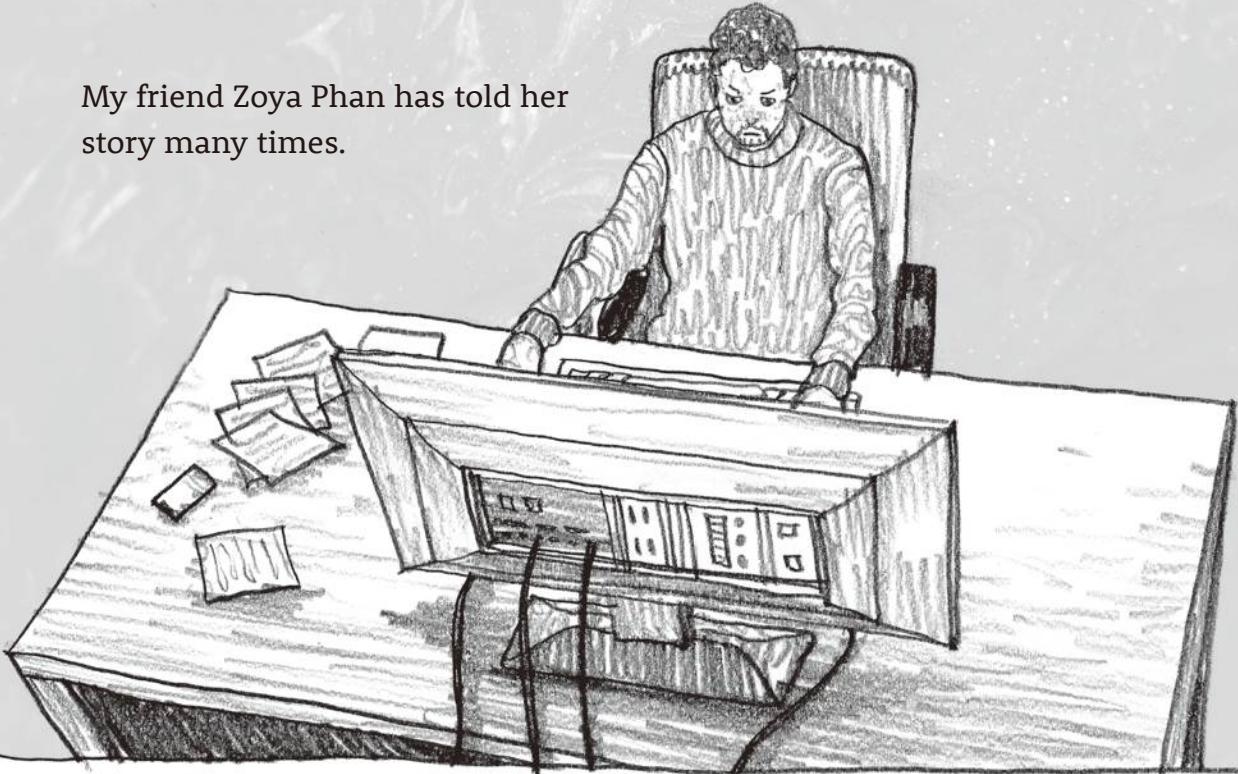
In the border regions, home to most of these minorities, the Burmese army acts like an occupying force.

They impose forced labour, destroy villages, and rape and murder civilians.



This violence has plagued families over generations.

My friend Zoya Phan has told her story many times.





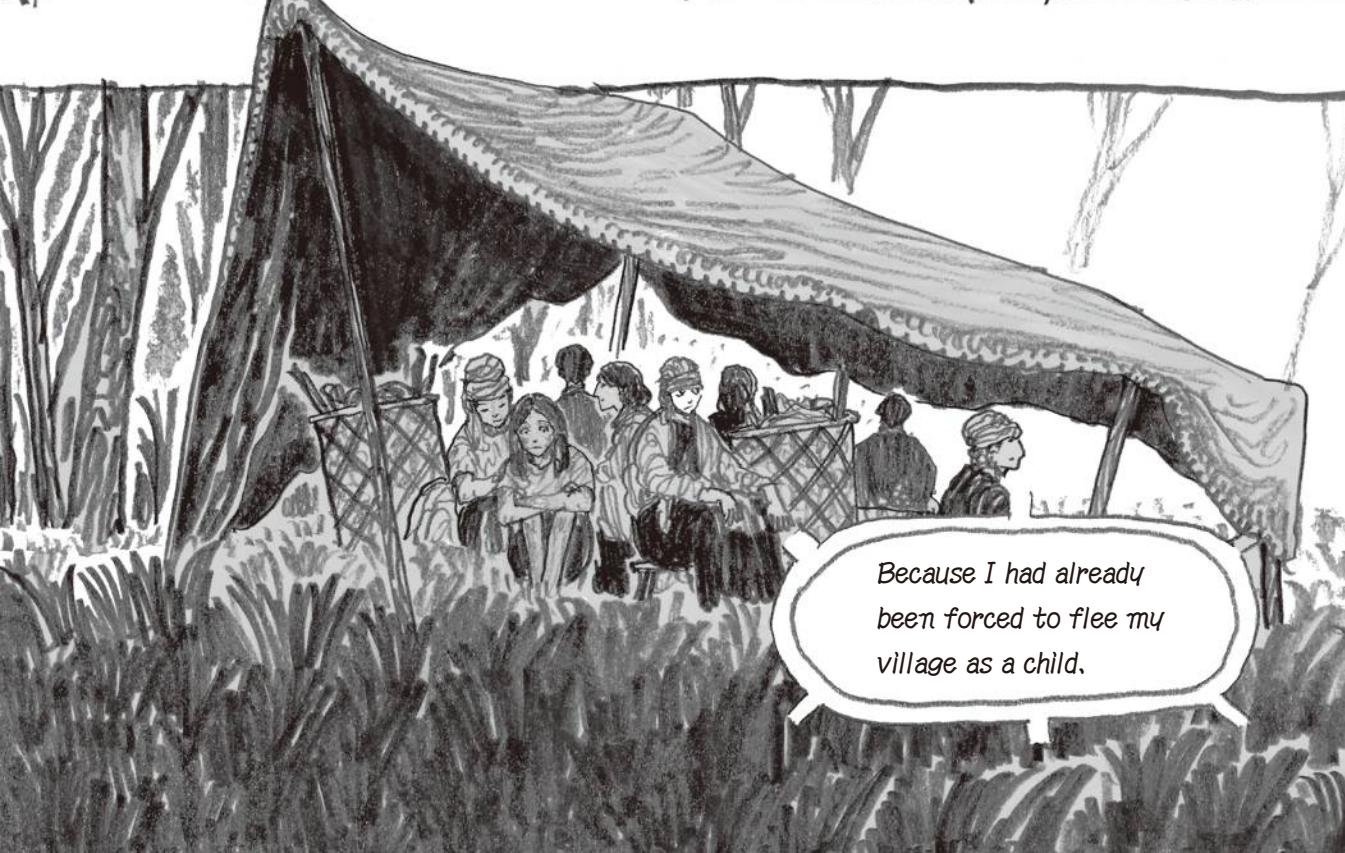
I was sitting doing my homework in my village in Karen State, in the eastern part of Myanmar.

When suddenly, without warning, we heard explosions and the crackling of gunfire.

The Burmese army was attacking us.

I was frozen in fear, I didn't know what to do.

but then I thought:  
“Oh no, not again!”





I can't properly describe how  
terrifying it was to run for  
your life with mortar bombs  
landing all around you,

or how the force of the  
explosions would knock  
you off your feet,

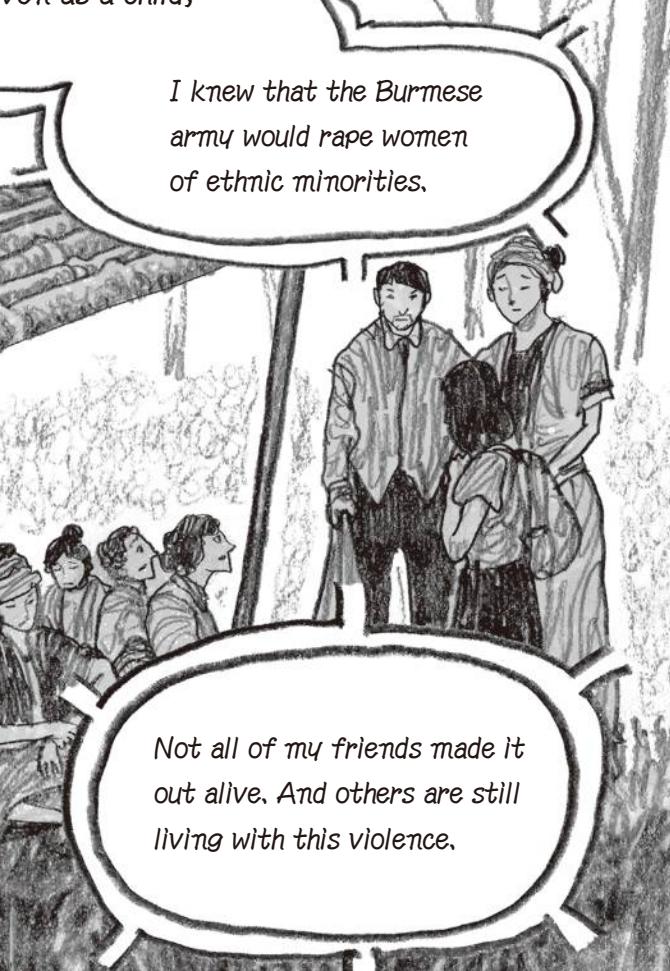
or the chaos and screams  
as people tried to grab  
their children and run.



but there was something more frightening than dying; being caught.



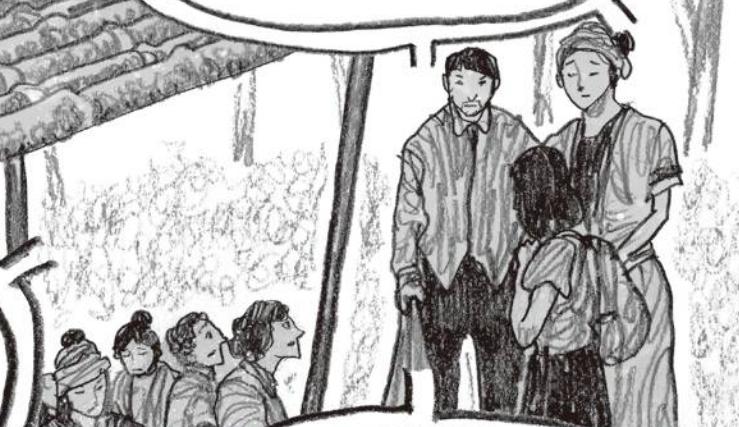
Even as a child,



I knew that the Burmese army would rape women of ethnic minorities.



I was very lucky. I escaped and, for the second time in my life, I ended up back in a refugee camp.



Not all of my friends made it out alive. And others are still living with this violence.



People like Zoya often owe their lives

to the ethnic armed organisations fighting the Burmese army.

These conflicts have been going on for decades.

On one side, minority representatives continue to demand a federal state.

On the other, the army tries to quash them and attacks civilians.

*Even during the so-called reform period of the 2010s, tanks and military vehicles still roamed our streets.*



The Burmese army  
will not accept  
the reality of our  
country's ethnic and  
religious diversity,

and we will never accept  
their oppression or let  
them destroy our cultures.



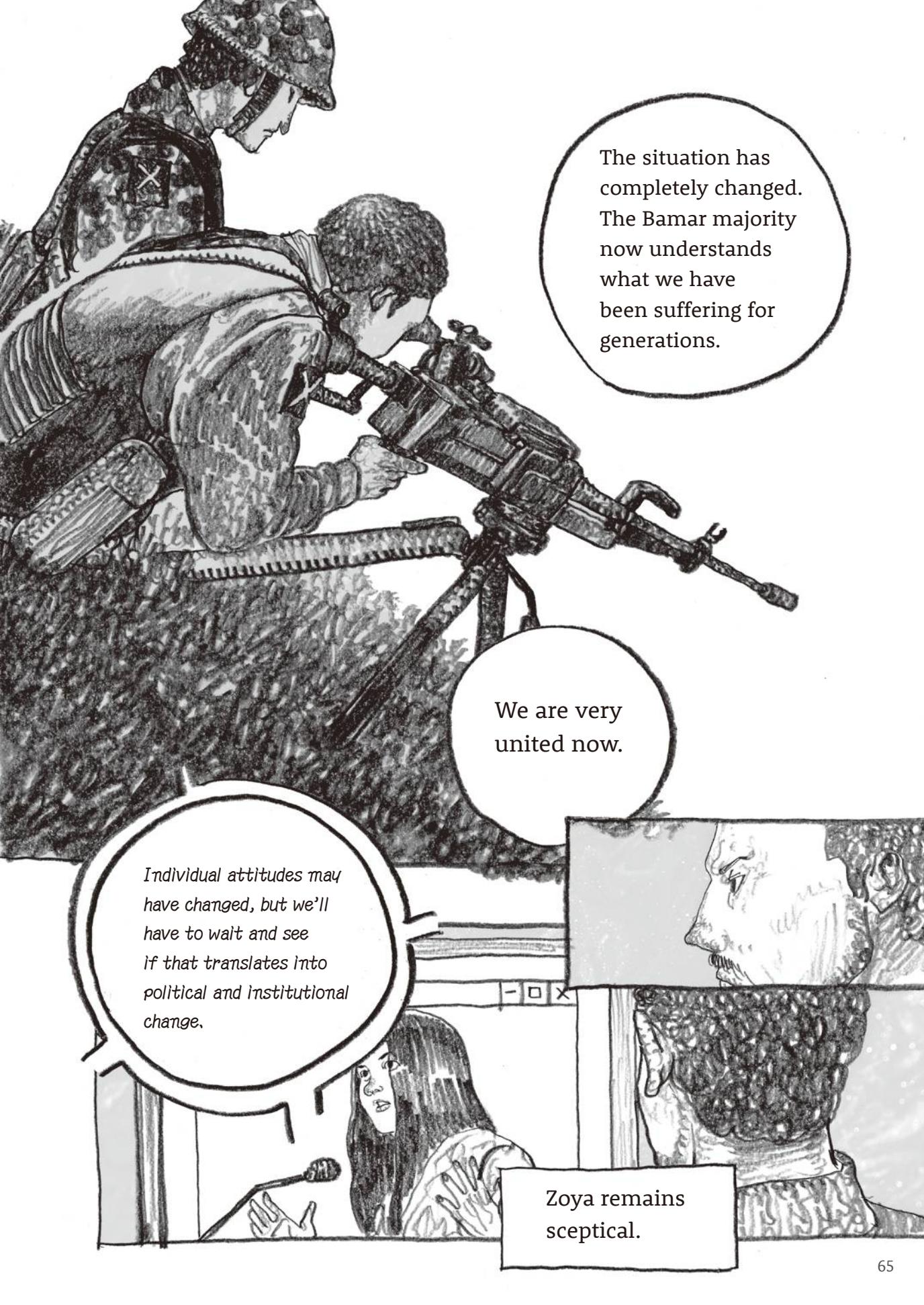
The military coup and crackdown has pushed some groups in border regions to take up arms again against the Burmese army,

and attitudes are changing within the Bamar majority,

I never thought I'd see Bamar people supporting our ethnic armed groups.

with some young people openly supporting the Karen or Kachin guerrillas.

A surprise for Kachin activist Seng Bu:

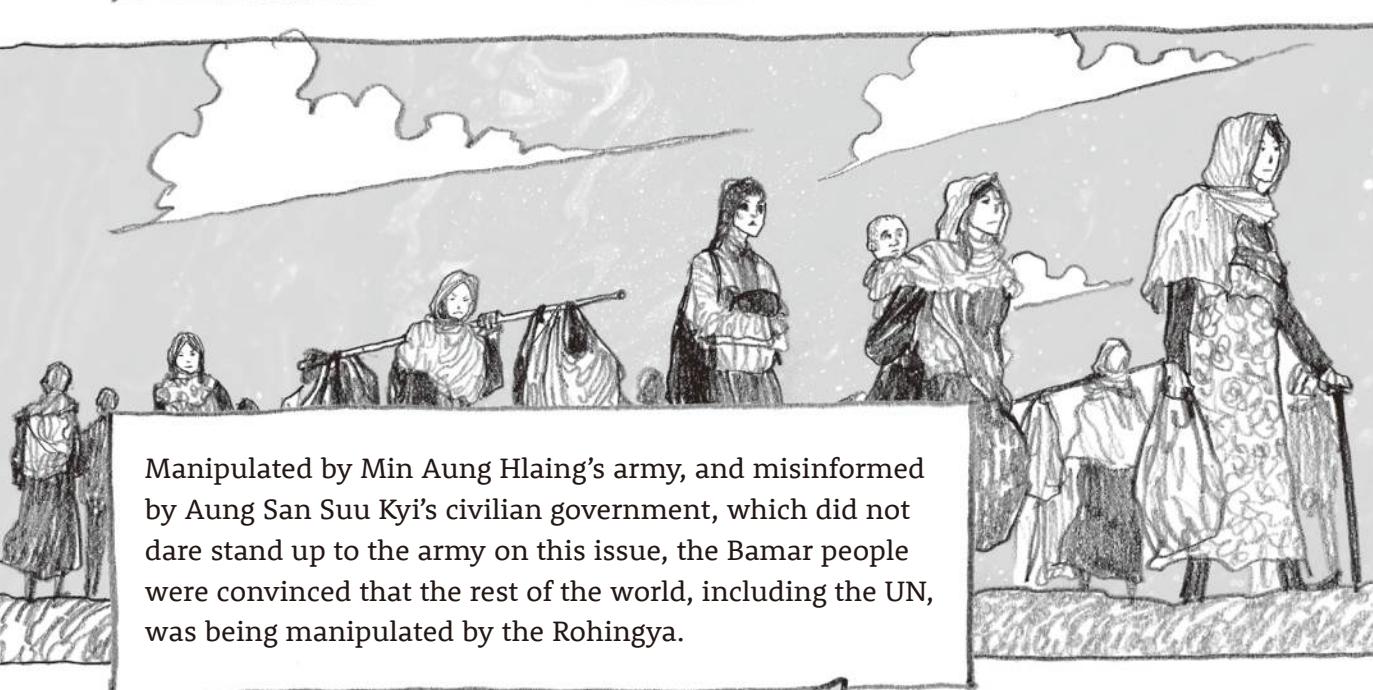
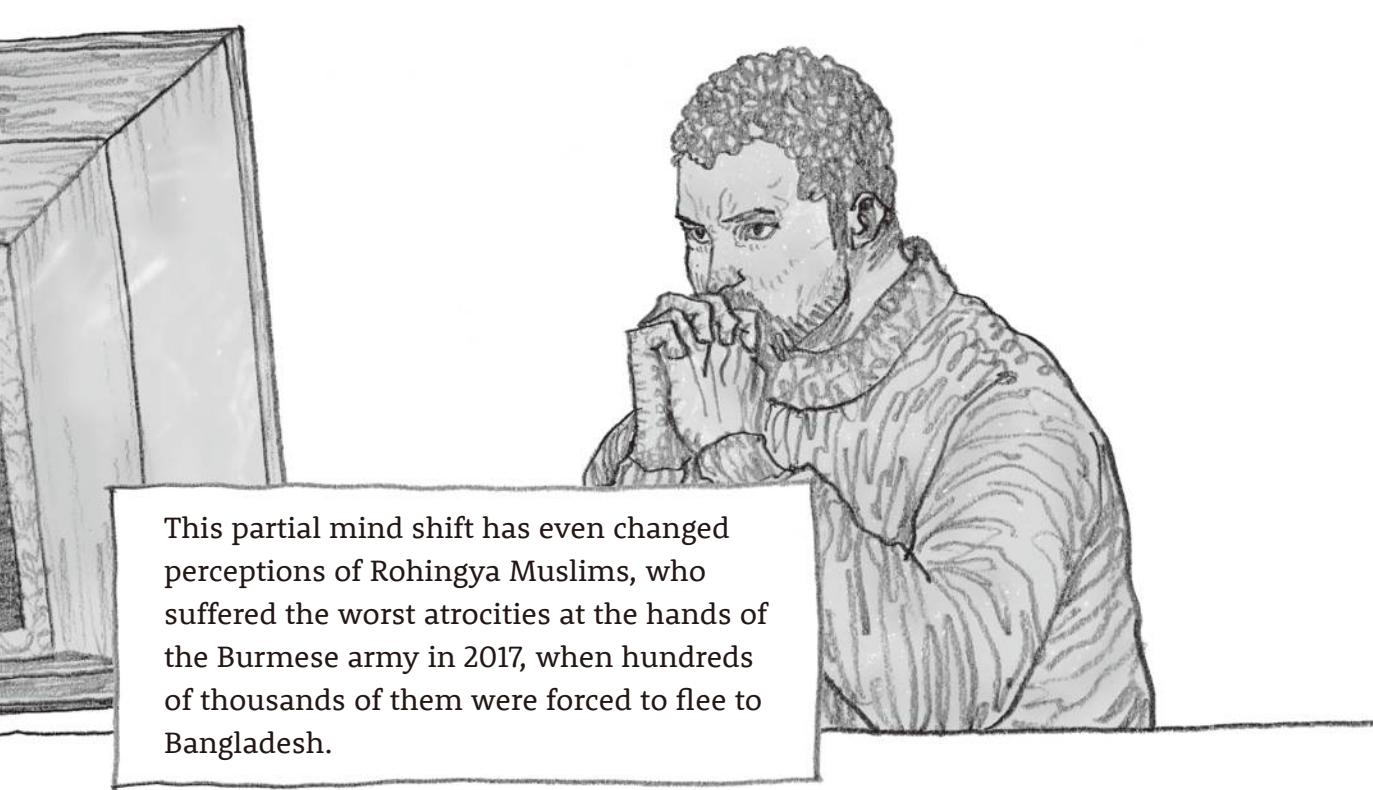


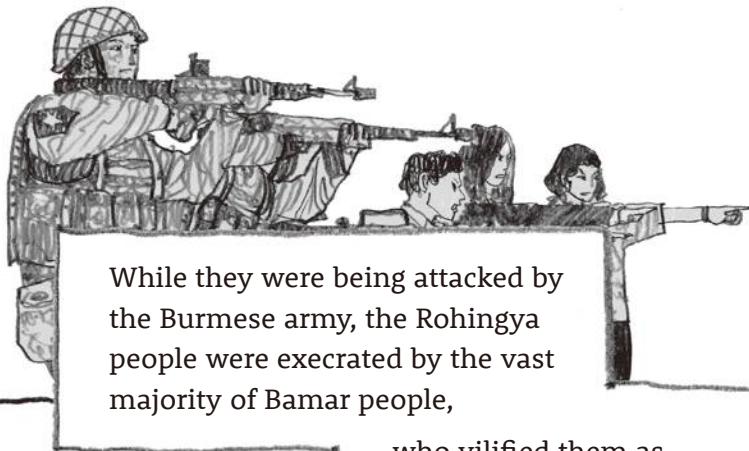
The situation has completely changed. The Bamar majority now understands what we have been suffering for generations.

We are very united now.

Individual attitudes may have changed, but we'll have to wait and see if that translates into political and institutional change.

Zoya remains sceptical.





While they were being attacked by the Burmese army, the Rohingya people were execrated by the vast majority of Bamar people,

who vilified them as terrorists and liars and even held protests against them.



In the words of a young Bamar man:



I realized I had been racist.

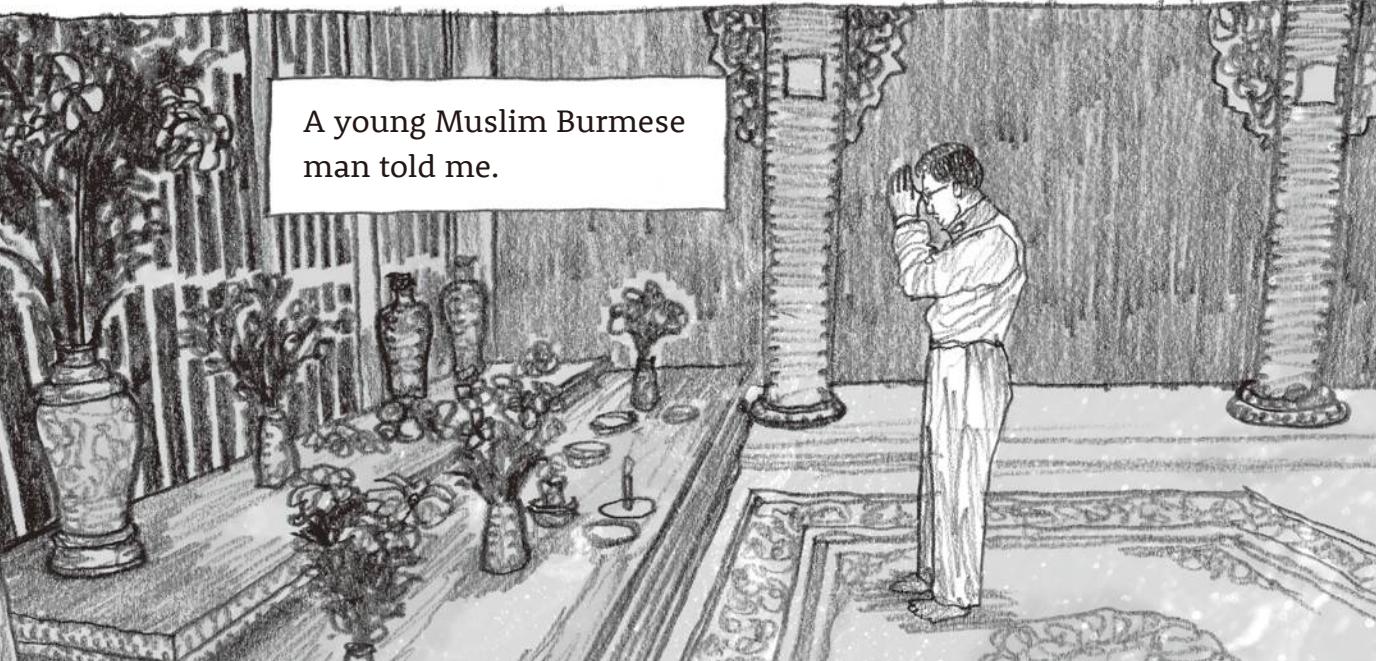
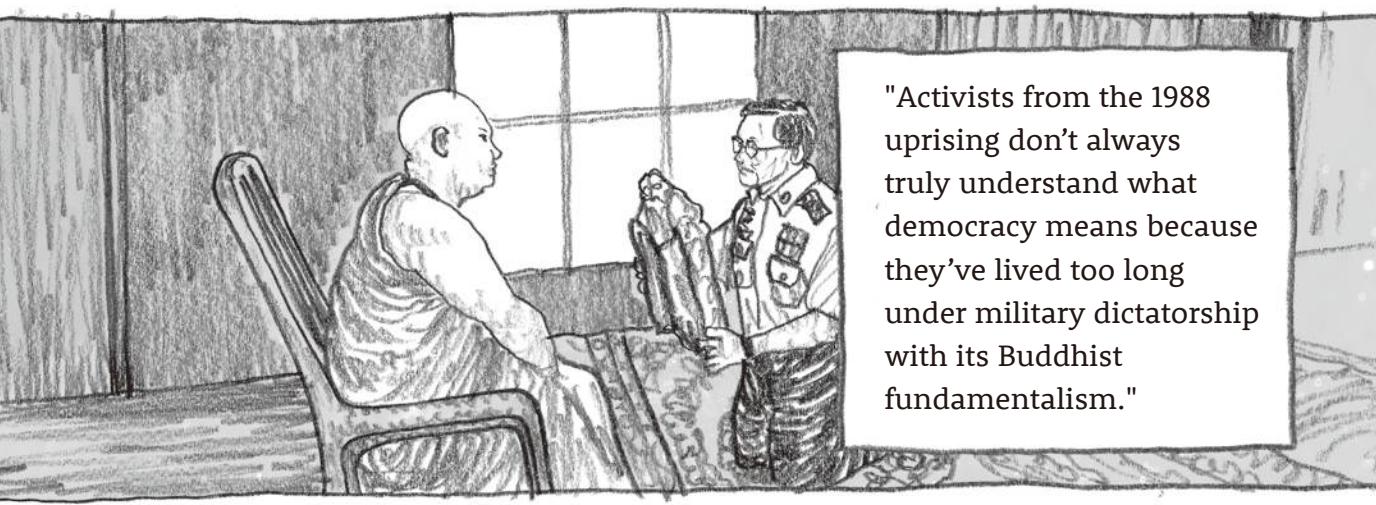
We were badmouthing the UN, blaming them for wanting to destabilise our government with their criticism on the Rohingya issue.

Now we are looking to them for help.



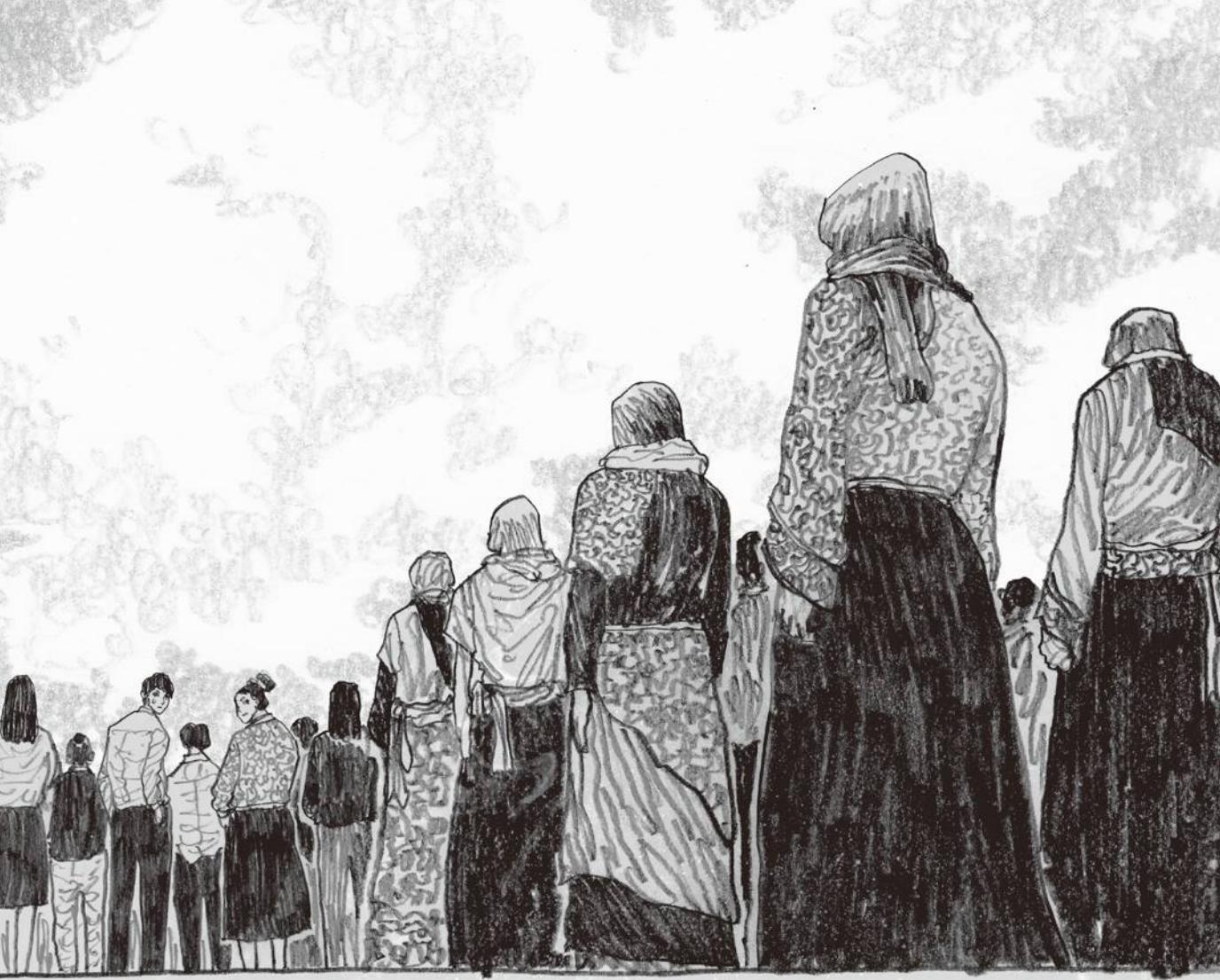


The fear and hatred for Muslims has even penetrated the pro-democracy movement.

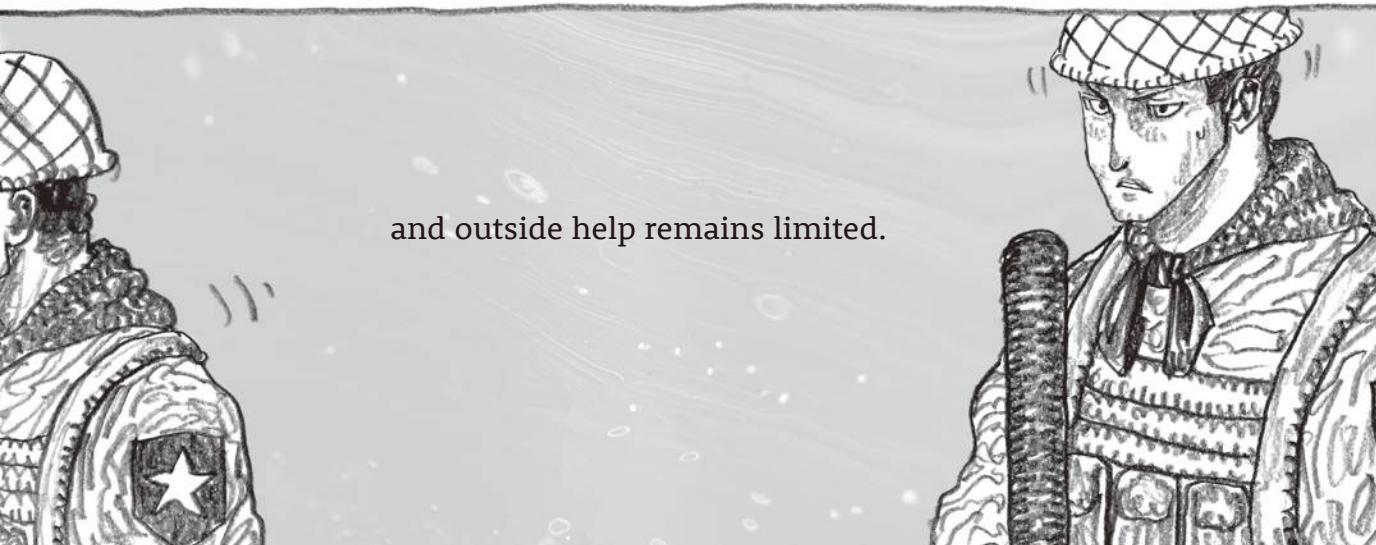
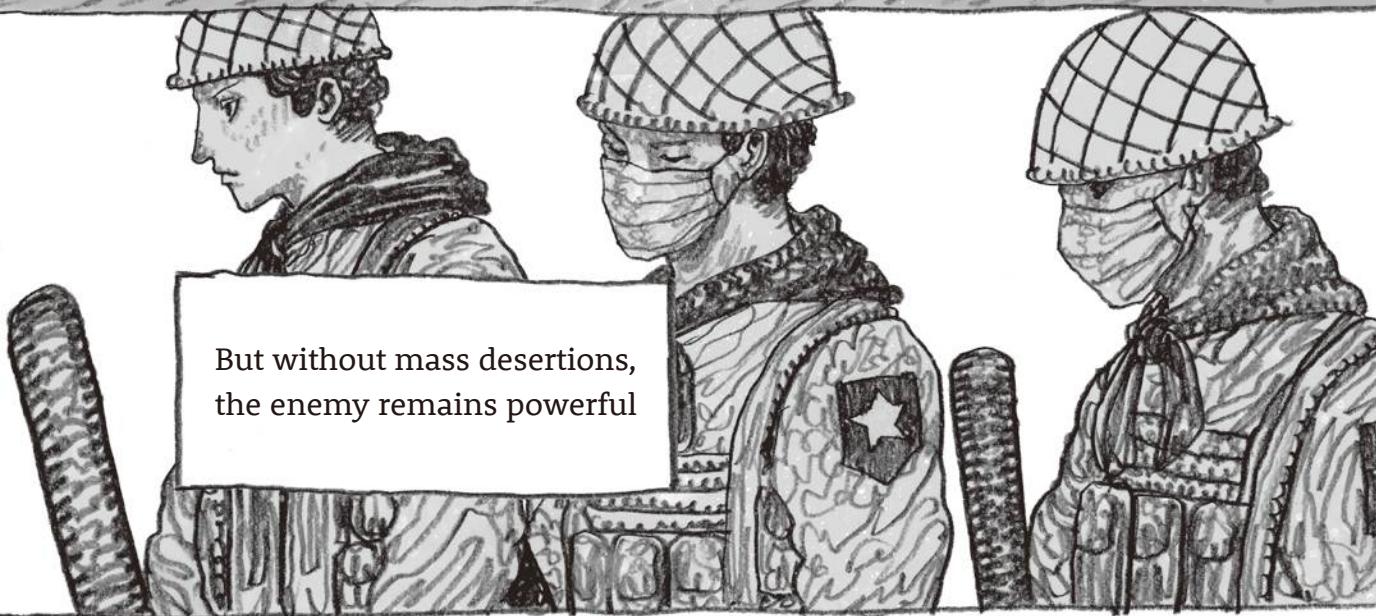


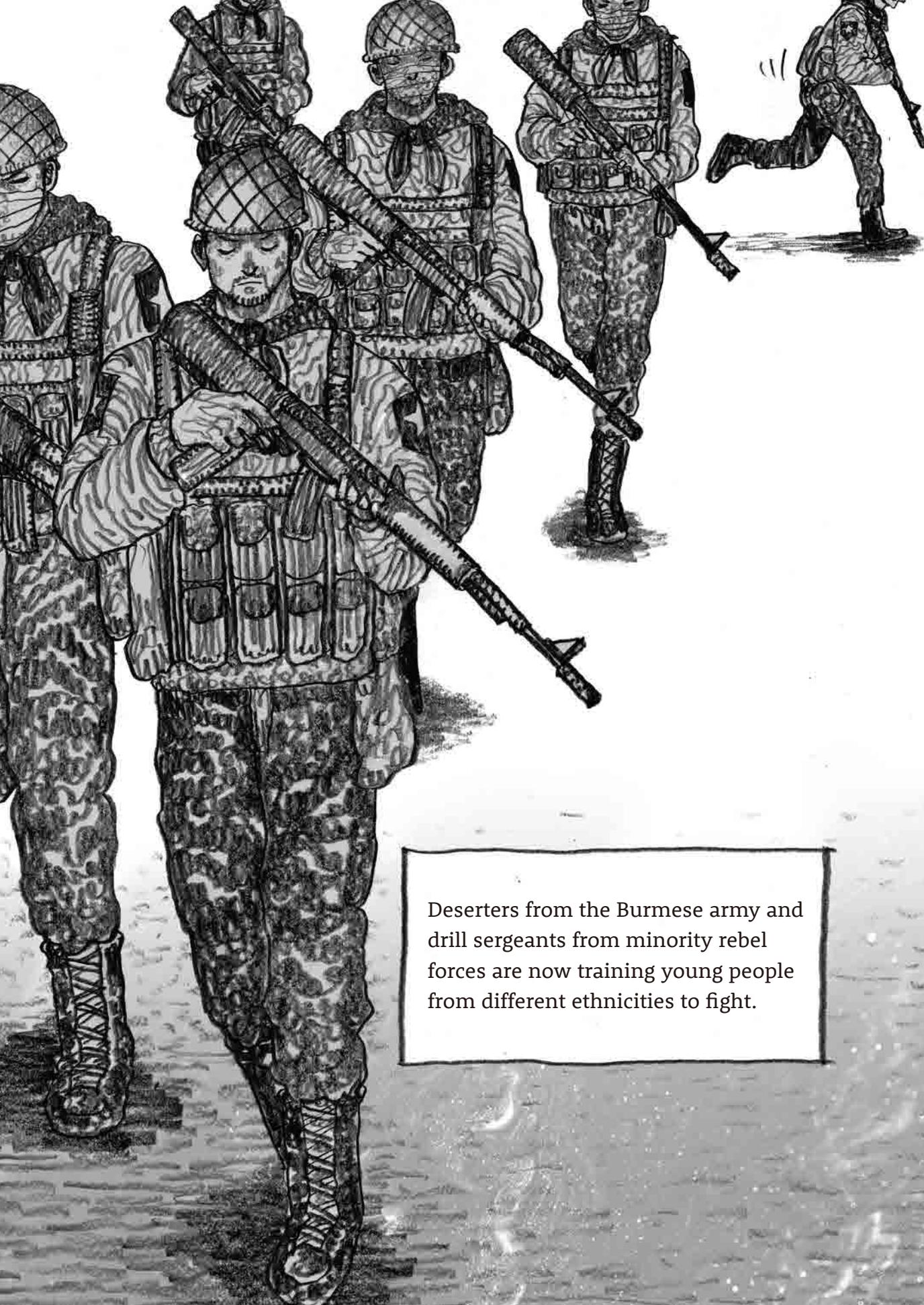
#SolidarityShortfall1





... is now more united.





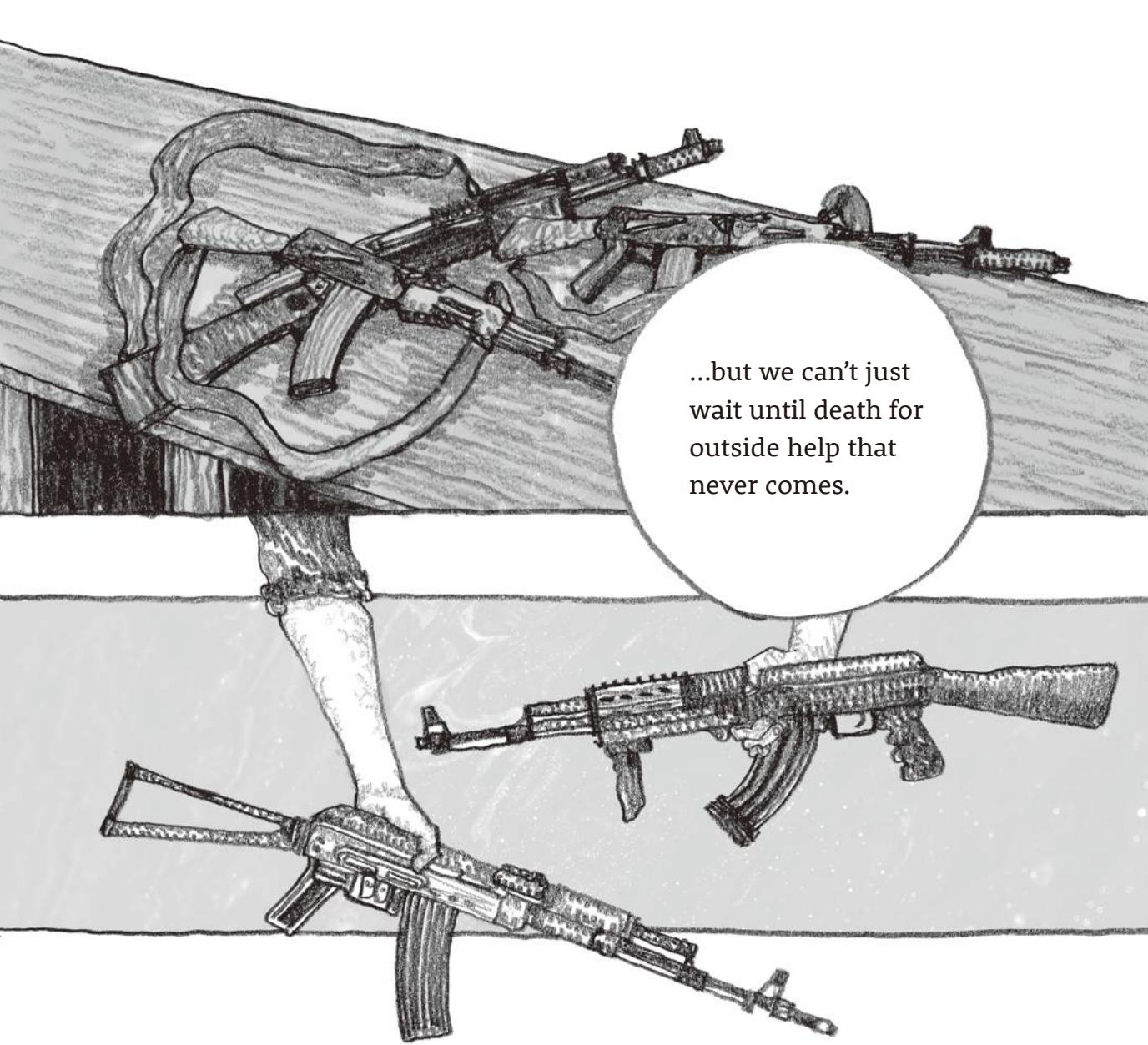
Deserters from the Burmese army and drill sergeants from minority rebel forces are now training young people from different ethnicities to fight.

Gum Tun, a young  
Kachin living in  
Yangon.

The world is  
just watching

while terror  
is shaking  
Myanmar.

Aung San Suu Kyi  
would never support  
violence....



...but we can't just  
wait until death for  
outside help that  
never comes.

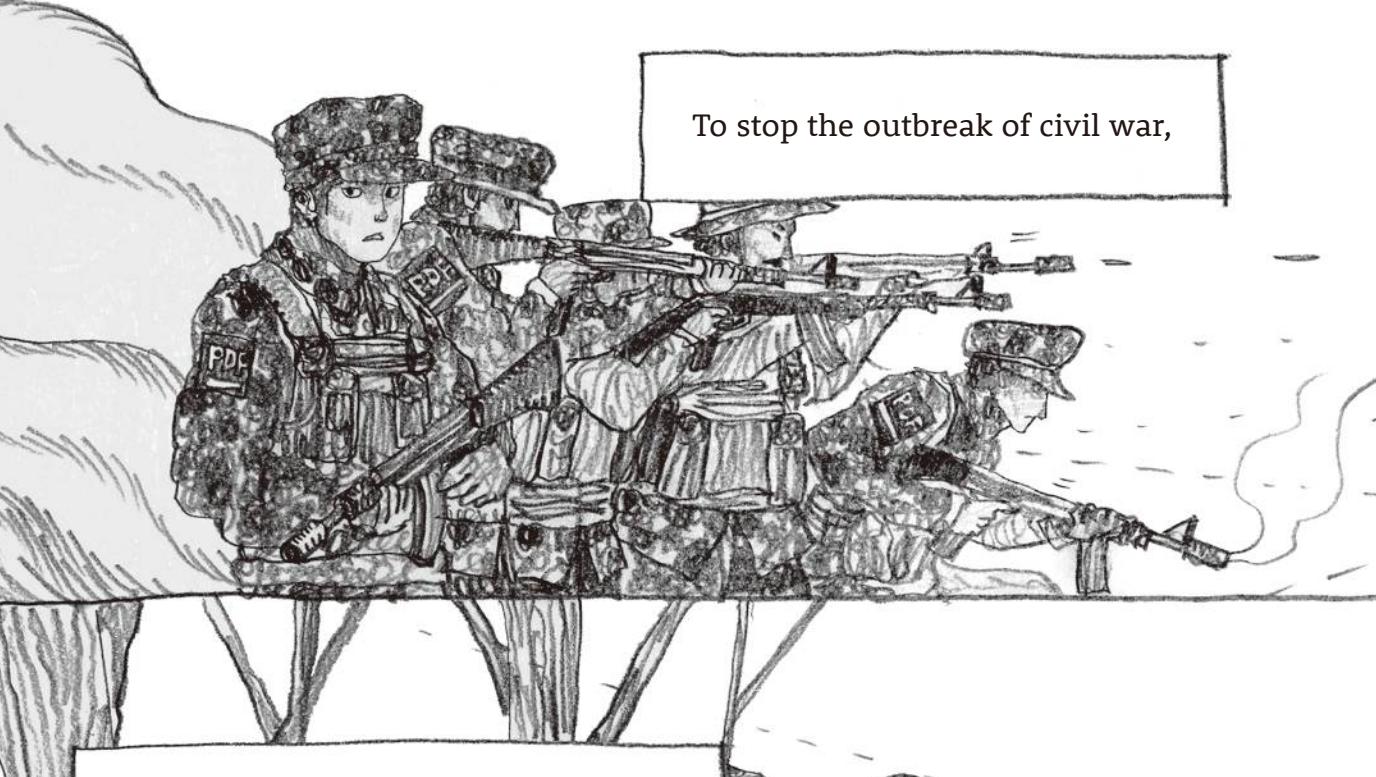
If the U.N. had  
responded more  
quickly,



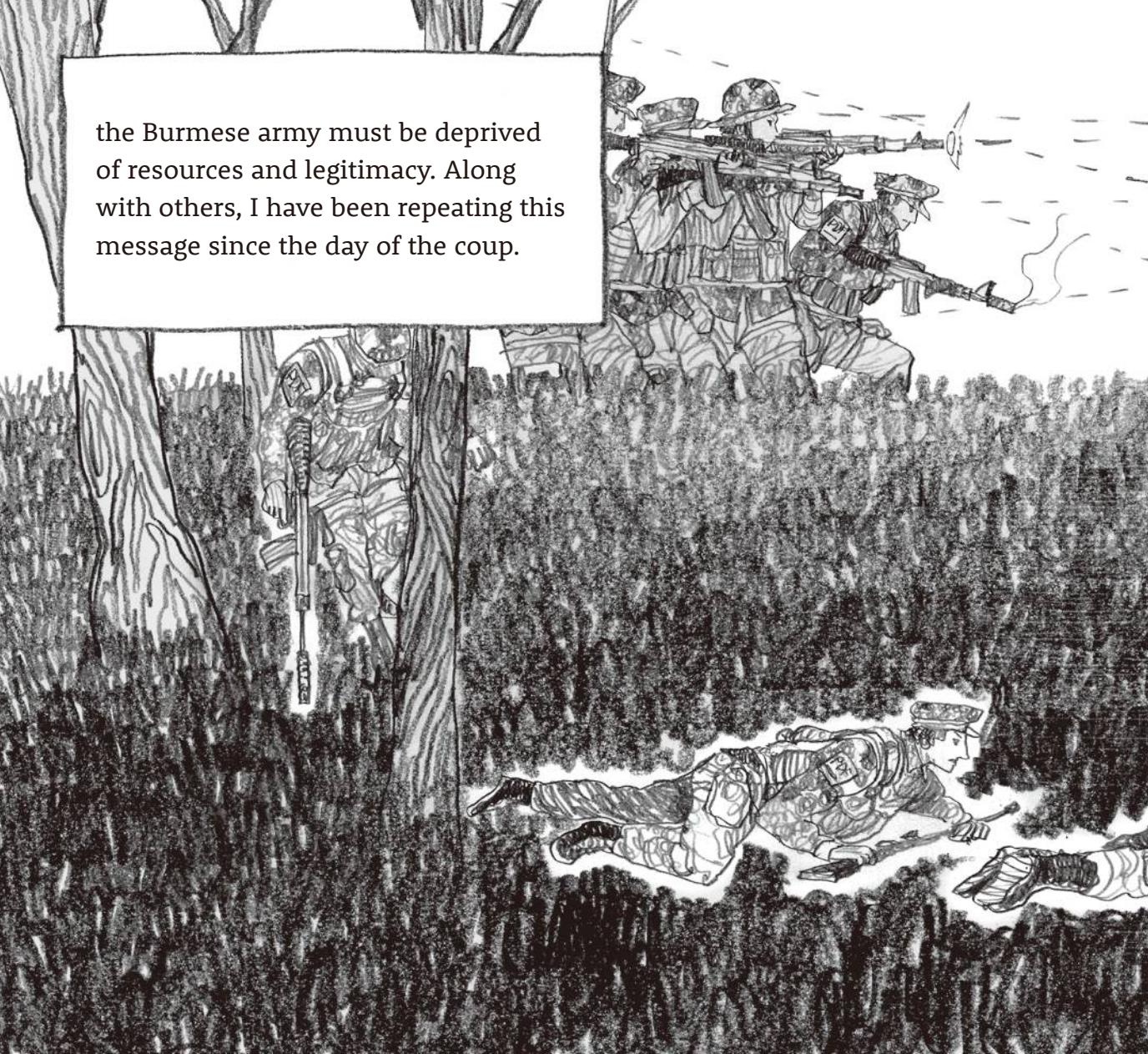
there would have been no  
People's Defence Forces.

\* 這支人民防衛軍的大部分成員，都是沒有任何軍事經驗的年輕人。

\* the majority of soldiers in the PDF are young people with no prior military experience.



To stop the outbreak of civil war,



the Burmese army must be deprived of resources and legitimacy. Along with others, I have been repeating this message since the day of the coup.